



# The State of American Philanthropy

Giving for  
Immigrants and  
Refugees

# Table of Contents

## ABOUT INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

Inside Philanthropy is a digital media site that covers the world of charitable giving. We report daily on foundations, major donors, and trends in philanthropy. Through our GrantFinder resource, we also profile and track thousands of funders working across key issue areas and geographic regions. Inside Philanthropy is supported by reader subscriptions and advertising. We do not receive funding from any other source. Learn more at [insidephilanthropy.com](http://insidephilanthropy.com)

## ABOUT THE STATE OF AMERICAN PHILANTHROPY

The State of American Philanthropy is a series of background papers on important topics and trends in U.S. philanthropy. The papers draw on past research and reporting by IP writers, as well as new interviews, grantmaking data, and other sources. Learn more at [insidephilanthropy.com/state-of-american-philanthropy](http://insidephilanthropy.com/state-of-american-philanthropy).

**AUTHORS:** Denise Shannon with Fundraising Now by Holly Hall

**EDITOR:** Michael Hamill Remaley

**COPY EDITOR:** Chris Packham

**GRAPHICS & DESIGN:** Sue-Lynn Moses

Executive Summary .....	1
Introduction .....	4
The Lay of the Land .....	8
Who's Giving.....	8
Who's Getting.....	9
Giving & Getting: A Deeper Dive.....	11
The Big Issues & Beyond.....	14
Funder Strategies & Trends...16	
Perspectives on Equity.....22	
A Closer Look at Funder Types.....25	
Private Foundations .....	25
Corporate Donors.....	26
Community Foundations.....27	
Major Donors .....	28
Intermediaries and Associations.....29	
Fundraising Now .....	31
An Analysis of Opportunities and Challenges.....34	
Resources .....	36

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, temporary workers: These are distinct but sometimes overlapping categories of people on the move, a growing segment of the human family across the globe. This brief examines support by U.S. institutional philanthropy and major donors for nonprofit work focused on immigrants and refugees within the United States.

Former President Donald Trump's animus toward non-European immigrants and refugees resulted in harsh policies and enforcement practices during his administration, and while some policies have been reversed, President Joe Biden's election did not result in immigrants being welcomed with open arms. Most notably, critics say the Biden administration has continued needless mass detention of immigrants seeking asylum.

The United States is by far the largest destination country of international migration, with more than 1 million immigrants arriving in the U.S. each year. Yet there were relatively few immigrant-serving organizations until the 1980s, and, outside of religious institutions, philanthropic support was scarce. Today, there are numerous nonprofit organizations in the space and a dedicated set of philanthropic individuals and institutions to support them. Funding for immigrants and refugees, however, remains a tiny sliver of all philanthropic dollars, though there is some optimism that funder interest and resources will continue to grow.

## Who's Giving

- Nonprofits focused on immigrants and refugees rely on funding from an especially diverse range of sources, including large and small private and community foundations, individuals, and faith-based organizations and other nongovernmental organizations. Only a handful of corporate foundations are in the mix, and on a modest scale.
- The leading private foundations in the field include The California Endowment, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Four Freedoms Fund (a collaborative fund managed by NEO Philanthropy), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Unbound Philanthropy and Zellerbach Foundation.
- Faith-based organizations play a substantial role in the arena, both providing services to refugees and immigrants, and as intermediaries, supporting other nonprofits working with people on the move. The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, for example, is one of the top givers of all categories to immigrants and refugees. NGOs that distribute grants include the Church World Service, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, and U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.
- Community foundations across the country are important sources of funding in this area. The Silicon Valley Community Foundation is one of the top givers on these issues, with immigration as one of seven target areas of its community action grants program.

## Who's Getting

- Direct services to newly arrived immigrants attract a large share of grant dollars and can include access to food and housing and other social services, transportation, referrals, employment training, family reunification, foster care, adult education, and youth programs.
- With a \$100 million grant from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative in 2021, one of the top recipients of philanthropic support in the field is now Fwd.us, which says it is “committed to creating a fair, clear, and modern immigration system that unlocks opportunity for all Americans.” The National Immigration Law Center and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center are additional large recipients of grants.
- The anti-immigrant actions of the Trump administration triggered significant pushback from organizations serving and advocating for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers and from philanthropic foundations and other donors; the number of funders supporting these organizations doubled between 2014 and 2018.

## The Big Issues and Funding Trends

- Historically, funding in the immigrants and refugees space was oriented principally toward the support of direct services for the newly arrived. This seems still to be true on the individual, non-mega-donor side and among some foundations. Most new arrivals come to large cities, so a substantial portion of funding is aimed at services in big, metropolitan areas. But as rural areas and small towns are host to an increasing number of immigrants and refugees, some funders have stepped up to the plate.
- Beyond direct services, many foundations favor advocacy and movement-building on these issues and are funding these strategies at the national, state and local levels.
- There is not a clear consensus among the major funders, national organizations or grassroots organizers on the issues and strategies the immigrant rights movement should prioritize its resources on.

## Equity in the Sector

- Immigration and issues of racial and ethnic equity are inextricable and sometimes indistinguishable. Immigration policies have been rife with racist intent since their beginning and bias against immigrants of color persists. Black migrants face particularly harsh treatment, and Indigenous migrants, whose numbers are growing, face distinct challenges.
- A relatively small but significant leading number of funders push back against anti-Black racism in the immigration system by funding Black-led organizations working on immigration.
- While racial and ethnic equity are central to the immigration conversation, gender and sexuality are also important factors. LGBTQ+ individuals, especially trans women, face enormous threats and too often experience violence.
- Unaccompanied minor children are also particularly vulnerable, facing high levels of violence and exploitation.

## Fundraising Now

- Nonprofits that depended heavily on revenues tied to government contracts for refugee resettlement services suffered in recent years when the Trump administration radically cut refugee admissions, and those organizations have scrambled to identify alternative funding sources.
- Some immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations are finding success by focusing on key subpopulations, such as LGBTQ+ people, and by more vocally advocating for the voices of immigrant people of color amid ongoing national discussions of race and equity.
- Some of the fundraisers and experts with whom IP spoke said ongoing organizational financial stressors from the pandemic combined with new challenges from inflation and potential donor decreases because of the stock market downturn have many questioning fundraising prospects, and even raising the possibility of nonprofit closures. But others report increases in fundraising along with growing funder interest.

Even though public opinion polls consistently show huge politically polarized divides on how to change immigration policies in the United States, they also show broadly positive views toward immigrants and refugees despite virulently negative views held by a vocal minority. But the politicization of immigrants and refugees' lives has had a deep effect on institutionalized philanthropy's willingness to get involved.

A safer area of philanthropic support are programs providing settlement and employment training programs. But bolder funders are directing more support to movement-building and organizing campaigns aimed at growing immigrants' voice in communities and on policies affecting their lives. Some organizations are combining direct services and community organizing, some discreetly, and others more overtly. Experts observed that there isn't a strong funding infrastructure for getting resources to smaller organizations that do one, the other, or a combination of the two.

# Introduction

This brief examines support by U.S. institutional philanthropy and major donors for nonprofit work within the United States focused on immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and temporary workers. Inside Philanthropy explores funding related to population displacement and resettlement within other nations in separate reporting.

The Trump administration's uncloaked hostility toward non-European immigrants to the U.S. resulted in a wholesale shift of the nation's complex immigration system through more than 400 executive actions on immigration that diminished humanitarian benefits, increased enforcement, and decreased legal immigration. The COVID-19 pandemic gave the administration the opportunity, behind the pretext of protecting public health, to effectively end asylum at the border with Mexico.

The Biden administration has taken numerous steps to reverse Trump's four-year assault on immigration, but some policies remain in place, in part because of inaction by the administration, and partly because of judicial action to bar changes. Immigrants and refugees are still on Americans' minds and in the media, with Ukrainians fleeing amid the Russian invasion, and when thousands of Haitians and nationals of other countries crossed the southern border in September, 2021, and encamped under the Del Rio-Ciudad Acuña International Bridge. The Biden administration at first refused to allow these asylum seekers to petition for protection, citing the Trump administration-imposed Title 42, which shut down the asylum process to "protect" the public health in the pandemic. Most of these would-be asylum seekers were returned to their home countries, even as Haiti was in the midst of a profound

humanitarian crisis as a result of natural disasters and the collapse of the rule of law.

With direction from President Biden, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control planned to revoke Title 42 in May, 2022, returning to the usual operating procedures that have been in place for processing migrants for decades, including releasing migrants applying for asylum into the U.S., sometimes under an alternative form of detention, or detaining migrants and deporting them back to their home countries. However, on May 20, 2022, a federal district court [granted a preliminary injunction](#), blocking the lifting of Title 42. The federal judge (Trump-appointed) ruled that the administration violated administrative procedural laws by not allowing for a public comment period before terminating Title 42, a process that usually takes several months. The Biden administration issued a statement disagreeing with the district court ruling and announced it will appeal the decision.

Immigrants were not welcomed with open arms after Biden's election. U.S. Customs and Border Protection data released in October 2021 indicated that U.S. authorities had detained more than 1.7 million migrants along the Mexico border during the 2021 fiscal year that ended in September, and arrests by the Border Patrol soared to the highest levels ever recorded. Supporters of more humane immigration policies were again dismayed in December 2021, when a federal court in Texas ordered the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to reinstate the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), informally known as the "Remain in Mexico Policy." MPP, created by the Trump administration in December 2018, mandated that asylum seekers from countries in the Western Hemisphere who arrived at the Southern border be given notices to appear in immigration court but had to wait in

Mexico for the adjudication of their claims, which can take months.

"Immigrants are everywhere. Immigrants are us," says Sara Campos of the Grove Foundation, which seeks to protect immigrants and advance their rights, primarily through its support for legal services and whose founders, Andy and Eva Grove, came to this country as a refugee (Andy) and an immigrant (Eva).

The United States is by far the leading destination country of international migration, with the country's migrant population numbering 51 million in 2020, equal to 18% of the world's migrants. More than 1 million new immigrants arrive in the U.S. each year, joining the United States' existing population of 329.5 million (2020 Census). With the significant exception of Native Americans, every person in the United States can trace their ancestry to immigrants from other countries.

Most immigrants to the United States live in big cities and suburbs, and nearly half live in just three states: California, Texas and Florida. Relatively few are in the Midwest or South (excepting south Florida), apart from Chicago and the twin cities in the Midwest and Atlanta and Raleigh Durham in the South. That said, some immigrants and refugees are moving to places in rural America, and in fact, are reviving and growing communities that otherwise would be experiencing deeper economic decline as a result of population loss. When native-born populations leave or die in large numbers, as has been the case in many rural areas across the U.S., closures of essential services such as schools, healthcare services and grocery stores can be immensely damaging. Immigrants and refugees have breathed new life into many rural

communities. This patchwork migration has resulted in a variety of community responses, from welcoming to outright hostility.

In 2018, the top country of origin for new immigrants coming into the U.S. was China, with 149,000 people, followed by India (129,000), Mexico (120,000) and the Philippines (46,000). People leave their home countries and aim to settle in the United States as a result of myriad adversities, including intimidation, armed conflict and other violence, climate change, natural disasters, gender inequity, and economic precarity and lack of jobs. They fall into two categories: asylum seekers, who arrive and ask for permission to stay, and refugees, who obtain permission before they arrive. Only a small fraction of aspirants meet the federal government's classification of a refugee as a person who "has experienced past persecution or has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." Still, since the passage of the Refugee Act in 1980, which set forth that definition, the United States has admitted more than 3.1 million refugees. That cumulative figure, however, pales in comparison to the total number of people meeting the United Nations definition of refugee worldwide, a population that reached 26.4 million in 2020 alone, according to the U.N. Refugee Agency ([UNHCR](#)). In 2017, for the first time in modern history, the United States settled fewer refugees (11,814) than the rest of the world.

Needy eligible refugees can receive special cash and medical assistance through the federal refugee program during their first eight months in the country. The Office of Refugee Resettlement provides funding for a broad range of social services to refugees, both through states and in

some cases, through direct service grants, to help refugees obtain employment, achieve economic self-sufficiency and adjust socially. Nine major, independent agencies (more than half of which are religiously affiliated) working under government contracts and supported by philanthropic dollars are responsible for virtually all resettlement work. Government assistance notwithstanding, philanthropic support for refugees in the U.S. is vital. Public assistance, moreover, is unavailable to those entering the country without papers. These individuals rely on themselves, their families and other contacts already living in the United States, as well as support from local, regional and national nonprofit organizations.

The United States may be, as is often said, a nation of immigrants, but after the Second World War, immigrant-serving organizations were few and far between until the 1980s, and, outside of religious institutions, philanthropic support was scarce. Representing an exception in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, various entities of the Rockefeller foundations were early supporters of immigrant-related projects. While the grantmaking ostensibly reflected the institutions' ultimate goal of improving the human condition, funding rationales varied considerably, from addressing immigrants' socioeconomic challenges positively to aggressive Americanization efforts and even support of significant new entry restrictions.

The waves of immigrants from European countries in the early 20th century slowed to a midcentury trickle. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act eliminated the national origins quota system that had been in place for 40 years but put a cap of 120,000 on the number of visas issued to immigrants from Western Hemisphere countries,

including Mexico. In 1976, Congress restricted the number of permanent resident visas issued to Mexicans to 20,000, a figure that contravened the migratory pressures in Mexico and the labor needs of U.S. employers – and further increased the undocumented migration across the southern border. Refugees from Indochina following the Vietnam war began arriving, as well as applicants from Haiti, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. This influx of non-European arrivals to the United States sparked a backlash that endures to this day, establishing immigration as a seemingly permanent, contentious fixture on the political landscape.

Until the 1980s, nonprofit organizations advocating for immigrants were few – the Settlement House movement of the early part of the century, which famously sought to help immigrants, had matured into more generalized social service delivery for a wide range of people experiencing poverty, with less vocal advocacy for the rights of immigrants. And at that point, other immigrant rights movements were small and siloed. But then President Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986, giving legal status to 1.7 million undocumented immigrants, and another 1.2 million under the related Special Agricultural Workers program. And for the first time in U.S. history, IRCA imposed sanctions on employers who hired undocumented immigrants. The law changed the lives of almost 4 million individuals who gained citizenship, and it also transformed the immigrant advocacy field, as its implementation sparked a surge of activities by nonprofits.

The Ford Foundation put in place a significant immigration program in the 1980s, becoming the dominant funder in the field. In 1990, Ford and the

J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation, Joyce Mertz Gilmore Foundation, the New York Community Trust and the Rosenberg Foundation established Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, a philanthropy-serving organization (PSO) that by 2022 had grown to 130 member institutions and 1,200 individual grantmakers in its network.

But funding for immigrants and refugees has always been a tiny sliver of all philanthropic dollars. A 2018 report by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy found that less than 1% of funding from the nation's largest U.S. foundations went to organizations serving immigrants and refugees, with national networks and grassroots groups being particularly underfunded. While the Trump administration's harsh policies sparked a boost in support for organizations working on the issue, it remains to be seen if this increase will last.

In an August 2020 Inside Philanthropy survey of fundraisers and funders, almost half (49%) of those who indicated their work involves immigrants and refugees said these issues were gaining momentum among funders. Almost a quarter (23.75%) said there was no discernible change in funder interest and resources. A fifth (20%) saw funder interest and resources falling because of redirected attention to the COVID pandemic. Only 15% said the issues were losing traction as a gradual trend.

# The Lay of the Land

## Who's Giving

Support for immigrants and refugees and issues related to these migrating people comes from a range of sources, including both large and small private and community foundations, individuals, and faith-based organizations and other nongovernmental organizations. A handful of corporate foundations are also in the mix on a modest scale. The dollar figure of U.S. philanthropic support for these issues has been growing steadily over the past decade, but remains a fraction of total giving.

The leading private foundations in the field include The California Endowment, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Four Freedoms Fund (a collaborative fund managed by NEO Philanthropy), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Unbound Philanthropy, and Zellerbach Foundation. NGOs providing grants include the Church World Service, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.

Individuals, of course, also support these issues through both small dollar donations to NGOs and through large-scale gifts directly to NGOs and through donor-advised funds and foundations. Fundraisers for some nonprofits in the field reported a significant increase in donations from individuals in the Trump years. On the ultra-high-net-worth end, Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg have given substantial amounts through the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, announcing in January 2021 a \$100 million grant over three years to FWD.us and simultaneously

moving the foundation's immigration portfolio to that organization. FWD.us focuses on policy and advocacy in relation to immigration and criminal justice.

### 10 Funders to Know: Immigrants and Refugees

California Endowment

Carnegie Corporation of New York

Colcom Foundation

Ford Foundation

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

JPB Foundation

NEO Philanthropy

Rosenberg Foundation

Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Unbound Philanthropy

In addition, faith-based organizations play a substantial role in the arena, both providing services to refugees and immigrants, and as intermediaries, supporting other nonprofits working with people on the move. The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, in fact, is one of the top givers of all categories to immigrants and refugees. LIRS supports a nationwide network of local agencies providing refugee resettlement, immigration, foster care and family reunification services.

Community foundations across the country are important sources of funding in this area, mainly through donor-advised funds. The Silicon Valley Community Foundation is one of the top givers on these issues, with immigration as one of seven target areas of its community action grants program. According to the foundation's web-based

grants database, in 2020, grants from its donor-advised funds, corporate-advised funds, committee-advised funds and those from SVCF's discretionary grantmaking strategies totaled more than \$5 million for immigration-related efforts. Additional community foundations providing significant support for these issues are the New York Community Trust, the Chicago Community Trust and the Oregon Community Foundation.

The following two sections of this brief illustrate the huge range in organizational missions among nonprofits working in the immigrants and refugees space; it is therefore difficult to make generalizations about what represents the typical revenue mix for such organizations. Some refugee resettlement service providers receive the bulk of their funding from government contracts and grants from religiously affiliated nonprofits, some immigration reform advocacy organizations receive most of their funds from private foundations and individual donations, but there really isn't an established norm for nonprofit revenue mix in this field. The Funders by Type section of this brief provides more details on intermediaries, a variety of private foundations, corporate givers and more.

## Who's Getting

Nested within the category of immigrants and refugees is a wide variety of strategies and activities – including direct services, education, training and advocacy – conducted by organizations of virtually every size and type. Direct services for newly arrived immigrants attract a large share of grant dollars and can include access to food and housing and other social services, transportation, referrals, employment training, family reunification, foster care, adult education and youth programs.

With a \$100 million grant from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative in 2021, Fwd.us became one of the top recipients of philanthropic support. The organization is "committed to creating a fair, clear and modern immigration system that unlocks opportunity for all Americans. That means protecting and improving existing legal immigration avenues, augmenting sensible border security and law enforcement, prioritizing real and serious public safety threats, and providing an earned pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented people living in the U.S." In addition to CZI's gift, Fwd.us has also received grant support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

### 10 Grantees to Know: Immigrants and Refugees

American Civil Liberties Union Foundation

American Immigration Council

Bethany Christian Services

FWD.us

Immigrant Legal Resource Center

Immigrant Justice Corps

National Immigration Forum

National Immigration Law Center

Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid

United We Dream Network

The National Immigration Law Center and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center are additional large recipients of grants. Established in 1979, NILC is dedicated to defending and advancing the rights of low-income immigrants through legal and policy strategies, as well as building political power and engaging in narrative and culture change. ILRC works with and educates immigrants, community

organizations and the legal sector to build a democratic society that values diversity and the rights of all people. The organization trains attorneys, paralegals and community-based advocates who work with immigrants around the country.

With 1 million members, United We Dream is the largest immigrant-youth-led network in the United States. Founded in 2008, UWD engages in policy advocacy, coalition-building, civic engagement, technology development and capacity-building to pursue policy, narrative and culture change at the local, state and national levels. UWD has also been an incubator for some of today's most prominent and effective young social justice leaders.

Another organization worth highlighting is Asian Americans Advancing Justice, a voice for the Asian American community – the fastest-growing population group in the U.S. – advocating for civil rights through education, litigation and public policy advocacy. The organization has a wide range of programs that include anti-Asian hate, redistricting and voting rights.

While the large and medium-sized organizations are unquestionably indispensable, a great number of the services provided to immigrants and

refugees are through small, community-based organizations. Many are located in states along the Mexican border, but organizations are doing this work in every state. Following are examples of grassroots organizations working on immigration, most of which are led by people who represent the communities they serve: AYPAL (API/Oakland, California), Trans Queer Pueblo (LGBT/Arizona), Immigration Equality (LGBTQ), New Mexico Dream Team (immigrant youth), Angry Tias and Abuelas (immigrants at the Rio Grande Valley border), DRUM Desis Rising Up and Moving (South Asian and Indo-Caribbean immigrants in New York City), Filipino Advocates for Justice (East Bay Area, California).

The anti-immigrant actions of the Trump administration triggered significant pushback from organizations serving and advocating for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and from philanthropic foundations and other donors. The number of funders in the space more than doubled between 2014 and 2018. The table below shows this increase over the period. (Dollar figures in the table show a steady climb upward, with an aberration in 2015 stemming in large part from an unusually large donation from the United Jewish Community Federation – \$208,432,432 – to the United Israel Appeal.)

### Cumulative Funding: Immigrants and Refugees 2014 - 2018<sup>1</sup>

Year	Dollar Value of Grants	Total Number of Grantmakers	Total Grants Awarded	Total Number of Recipients
2014	\$316.62M	2,196	6,255	1,650
2015	\$821.66M	3,149	10,384	2,047
2016	\$560.57M	3,276	12,396	2,221
2017	\$708.90M	4,356	11,785	2,492
2018	\$734.96M	4,786	13,433	2,831

Source: Candid

The yearly average of local funding for the pro-immigrant, pro-refugee movement groups also increased from \$42 million to \$116 million between 2017 and 2018, according to the National Council for Responsive Philanthropy. Intersectional movement building found itself better funded as immigrant and refugee rights advocates emerged to lead the anti-Trump “resistance.”

The Trump years “taught [us] how to advance our goals and strengthen the immigrant justice movement, even in the most hostile conditions,” said Anita Khashu, director of Four Freedoms Fund. It remains to be seen whether this growth trend will continue, but it is clear that the need for funding persists.

Just a few of the other leading organizations regularly appearing on lists of immigrants and refugee-focused nonprofits receiving significant resources from institutional philanthropy include: National Day Laborer Organizing Network, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, International Rescue Committee, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, UnidosUS (formerly National Council of La Raza), Florida Immigrant Coalition, Instituto del Progreso Latino, American Immigration Council, New York Immigration Coalition and Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles.

There are also many anti-immigration organizations that receive a large share of private donations, including Federation for American Immigration Reform and Center for Immigration Studies (this area of funding is discussed in the next section).

## Giving & Getting Deeper Dive

As previously mentioned, there isn’t a clear pattern of certain types of funders focusing on particular segments of the immigrants and refugees space. Some of the largest areas of work within the space are immigrant services, immigrant rights, immigration law, immigration and naturalization, and internal resettlement.

**Top 5 Funding Priorities: Immigrants and Refugees 2014 - 2018<sup>1</sup>**

Subject	Amount Funded	Grantmakers
Immigrant Services	\$1.67B	7,128
Immigrant Rights	\$1.40B	3,343
Immigration Law	\$578.03M	1,622
Immigration and Naturalization	\$565.34M	294
Internal Resettlement	\$5.71M	26

Source: Candid

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, based in Silver Spring, Maryland, receives considerable support for services for immigrants and refugees. Its Reception and Placement program benefits refugees in the U.S. from their arrival through 90 days in the country. Through the program, HIAS affiliates provide essential services to refugees, including airport reception; safe, affordable, sanitary housing; essential furnishings, food and clothing; cultural and community orientation; English as a second language education; and assistance with access to other social, medical and employment services. Supporters have included the Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, and the Arthur M. Blank Foundation.

Taking a different tack in the services area is Conexión Américas. Based in Nashville, Tennessee, Conexión Américas offers programming to build a welcoming community and create opportunities for 9,000 Latino families each year through programs that focus on social, economic and civic integration. Funders include Bloomberg Philanthropies and Nashville's Scarlett Family Foundation.

Immigration law and immigrant rights is a major area of work in the field, somewhat discrete from, but often overlapping with, direct services.

Nonprofits working in this space engage in an array of activities, including pro bono legal services for individual asylum seekers, creating curricula for training the legal community, and providing “know your rights” education programs to undocumented immigrants. A recipient of one of the greatest sums of grants and donations in this area is Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, which was founded in 1970 to protect the legal rights of farmworkers. The lion’s share of funding for TRLA comes from Legal Services Corporation, the federal agency that provides financial resources to legal aid organizations throughout the nation, and Texas Access to Justice Foundation. TRLA receives smaller grants from a variety of federal, state and local agencies, foundations and corporations.

Organizations providing workforce training and new business development assistance for immigrants receive a considerable amount of funding. One good example is [US Together](#), which receives funding from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement and is an affiliate of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. Its Microenterprise Development program helps immigrants to former rust-belt communities like Cleveland, Buffalo and others start businesses that bolster the economies of struggling regions. Leaders from US Together say

their services are in even greater need now because of the influx of immigrants to the midwest from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

While the majority of funding on the issues related to immigrants and refugees supports organizations serving or advocating for these people on the move, substantial amounts are directed to groups that seek to further restrict all immigration to the United States and contribute to widespread demonization of migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees.

The biggest anti-immigration funder is Pittsburgh-based Colcom Foundation, a private foundation established in 1996 by Cordelia Scaife May, a Mellon family heiress. (Another Mellon heir, Timothy Mellon, has given more than \$50 million as an individual donor to at least one anti-immigrant fund. For more information, see the individual donor section, below.) May and John Tanton, a Michigan-based ophthalmologist whom the Southern Poverty Law Center called the “racist architect of the modern anti-immigrant movement,” helped establish the current immigration restrictionist movement through decades of building and funding organizations that advocate for reduced immigration, including policies for greater enforcement at the southwestern border, a reduction in legal immigration and sanctions against employers who hire unauthorized immigrants.

Two of the top recipients of philanthropic dollars in the field, the Federation for American Immigration Reform and NumbersUSA, maintain they are not anti-immigration, but they are unabashedly in favor of restrictionist immigration policies. FAIR has been designated as a hate group by the SPLC, as have other Colcom grantees, including the Center for Immigration Studies, a think tank. Together,

these three pillar organizations received \$86.5 million in grants in the years 2014 to 2018. It is worth noting that senior staff from these and other restrictionist groups moved into key positions dealing with immigration in the Trump administration.

Colcom also funds a smaller number of environmental and conservationist organizations, and advocates have charged that Colcom is “greenwashing” its anti-immigrant stance. The Center for American Progress explored the “greening of hate” phenomenon in an issue brief in February 2021. Using the false notion that immigrants to the United States were to blame for environmental degradation, restrictionist propagandists aim to both shield their racist, nativist agenda and sidestep the true reasons for climate change. For the most part, the mainstream environmental movement has disavowed what some call “ecofascism” and its purveyors.

Some environmental organizations have returned funds from Colcom and other funders. According to Pittsburgh City Paper, Pittsburgh area-based Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP) and

Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project (EHP) said they will no longer accept or seek funding from Colcom. Washington, D.C.-based American Rivers, Inc. also ended its relationship with Colcom. “Although GASP does not work on immigration issues per se, we take the concerns expressed seriously,” said a GASP statement. “We decided in 2019 the right course of action for us was ending the relationship.”

Although hardly an exhaustive study of restrictionist funders, CAP’s report identified two additional foundations making grants in the space, the Weeden Foundation and the Foundation for the Carolinas. The Weeden Foundation’s overarching mission is to protect biodiversity. Weeden’s published 990s from 2016, 2017 and 2018 do not list its grant recipients, nor does its website. In 2015, about \$165,000 out of the funder’s \$2.2 million in grantmaking went to think tanks working to reduce immigration, including the Center for Immigration Studies, FAIR, and NumbersUSA, along with Californians for Population Stabilization, Negative Population Growth, Inc. and Progressives for Immigration Reform. With the rest of its giving, the Weeden Foundation supported environmental organizations, conservation efforts and other means to curb population growth, including groups that advocate for reproductive rights.

### Grantee Spotlight



The 2000 U.S. Census showed a nearly 450% growth of the Hispanic population in Nashville. To address this changing demographic, Conexión Américas was founded in part to help Latino families and individuals in Middle Tennessee. Established in 2002, Conexión has a wide range of supporters including the W.K. Kellogg and Frist foundations, as well as, corporate funders such as AT&T and Amazon.

The Foundation for the Carolinas is in many ways a typical community foundation, with initiatives on topics from COVID-19 relief to local arts. But it also hosts a large donor-advised fund that has supported several anti-immigration groups, including Center for Immigration Studies, FAIR and NumbersUSA. That fund channeled nearly \$21 million to nine such groups between 2006 and 2018, according to CAP.

Additional funders of FAIR include the Sidney A. Swensrud Foundation, the Sara Scaife Foundation, the F. M. Kirby Foundation. Additional funders of NumbersUSA include the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, the C. Gary and Virginia Gerst Foundation, and the National Christian Charitable Foundation, a manager of donor-advised funds. The Center for Immigration Studies gets the lion's share of its funding from Colcom, but additional funders include the Fred Maytag Family Foundation, the Sara Scaife Foundation, the William H. Donner Foundation and the Burnap Foundation.

While these funders and even the restrictionist organizations themselves may maintain that they are not anti-immigrant, they undeniably feed a negative perception of immigrants in the public square, one that is amplified through right-wing media outlets and personalities. This “data-free” depiction of immigrants, especially undocumented ones, incites fear and hostility, and importantly, is used to energize right-wing voters. These tactics are tough to quash, particularly because their principal targets, undocumented immigrants, have no recourse as voters.

## The Big Issues & Beyond

This section leaves aside the bifurcation in the field between those advocating for immigrants and more humane immigration policies and those seeking to curtail immigration to the U.S. and instead focuses on the issues within the pro-immigrant community that are being discussed and are playing out in funding strategy discussions.

**Direct Services and Advocacy Compete for Extremely Limited Funding.** Historically, funding in the immigrants and refugees space was oriented principally toward the support of direct services for the newly arrived. This seems still to be

true on the individual, non-mega-donor side and among some foundations. As most new arrivals have been in large cities, a substantial portion of funding is aimed at services in metropolitan areas. Service providers there include the International Rescue Committee and Lutheran Social Services. But as rural areas and small towns are host to an increasing number of immigrants and refugees, some funders have stepped up to the plate.

### Funder Spotlight



The Grove Foundation’s Immigrant Program works to protect immigrants and advance their rights through legal services, policy advocacy and national impact litigation. Though Grove focuses its grantmaking on the Bay Area, it also offers funding to national groups working in advocacy and impact litigation. Recent grantees include the Immigrant Legal Resource Center and the National Immigration Law Center.

In fact, organizations serving immigrants and refugees can be found in far-flung places across the country, and they are supported by grants from local community and private foundations, as well as individual donations. One22 in Jackson, Wyoming, for example, provides services to immigrants in Teton County and receives grants from the Wyss Foundation, the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole, and the Start Something That Matters Foundation. Dairy and other farm workers in the Northeast formed the Migrant Justice organization, which has been supported by the John Merck Fund, the Amalgamated Charitable Foundation, and the Lawson Valentine Foundation, among others. The Adelante Alabama Worker Center provides services to immigrants and advocates for their rights,

supported by Hill-Snowdon Foundation and the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, among others. To provide critical immigration status legal services to residents living in rural communities in Oregon, the Meyer Memorial Trust awarded \$200,000 in 2022 to the Immigration Counseling Service of Portland; Sherwood Foundation of Omaha, Nebraska, has given substantial amounts (around \$1.5 million in 207, 2018, 2019) to Justice for Our Neighbors and other organizations for their work with immigrants and refugees in rural Nebraska.

## Inside Philanthropy

August 2020 Survey

*"There needs to be more support around legal services for low-income individuals and families, especially immigrants, who are victims to an ever changing policy and legal landscape."*

—Fundraiser, Falls Church, Virginia

Beyond direct services, many foundations instead favor advocacy and movement-building on these issues and are funding these strategies at the national, state and local levels. Some see the two avenues for funding as competing interests. A fundraiser at an immigrant services nonprofit said that foundations “are not giving to organizations doing direct service. They are mostly giving to institutions that have tons of money, or they’re giving to movements. Our most important funders are those who understand the importance of ensuring organizations providing direct service can continue to do so, [such as] Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Commonwealth Fund, community foundations, etc.”

The truth is that all these strategies and more are needed when it comes to immigrants and refugees. Rini Chakraborty, senior director of the Four Freedoms Fund, put it this way: “Whether funding

is for humanitarian needs, legal services, or advocacy and communications, the truth is that in this moment and around this issue, those needs are inextricably tied.”

Even when a funder settles on a strategy, there are additional decisions to be made. Foundations that fund advocacy, movement-building and organizing must consider several factors. For instance, where, geographically, should they invest resources? California has the greatest number of immigrants in the country and has made significant progress on immigrant rights – permitting undocumented people in the state to obtain a drivers license, supporting the path to college for the undocumented, and allowing undocumented Californians under 26 to join Medi-Cal (and those 50 and over will become eligible in 2022). Texas, on the other hand, has the longest border with Mexico, the second-highest population of immigrants, and draconian policies and practices toward people crossing the border both legally and illegally and residing in the state. Should a funder support efforts in California to continue advancements or work in Texas to turn the tide there? Or should the funder instead focus on organizations working toward immigration reform at the national level?

**Lack of Consensus on Advocacy/Organizing Focus.** There is no clear consensus among the major funders, national organizations or grassroots organizers on the issues and strategies the immigrant rights movement should prioritize. Calls for federal level “immigration reform” have reverberated for decades from every corner of the immigration conversation. Should funders support advocating the passage of the DREAM Act, which would give Dreamers (young undocumented immigrants who were born abroad but came to the United States as children) permanent legal status

and a pathway to citizenship? Some advocates say the DREAM Act does not go far enough and instead favor federal legislation that would grant citizenship to all 11 million undocumented immigrants. And even if that were to happen, what about future waves of immigrants? The pro-immigrant movement has not dealt forthrightly with this question, some funders say. With pressures that result in migration on the rise in places around the globe—climate change, armed conflict, political corruption—the inevitable arrivals to the U.S. must be contemplated in creating just immigration policies.

Beyond this central debate, additional advocacy possibilities involve opposing harsh enforcement tactics and mass detention and supporting policies that advance the protection of immigrants from deportation, extend temporary protected status to additional countries, include undocumented immigrants in Medicaid and other health coverage, and build immigrant leadership and political power.

### Inconsistent Messaging Support from Labor Movements.

Labor rights intersect with immigrant rights, and traditional pro-worker bastions, labor unions, have been on both sides of the immigration debate. For example, in the 20th century, the AFL-CIO, the largest federation of unions in the United States, believed that expansion of the available pool of workers was adverse and

that undocumented immigrants, in particular, drove down wages. That position changed in 2000, when the executive council, pressured principally by unions representing service workers, voted to advocate for undocumented immigrants to be granted citizenship.

Today, both business and labor unions are allies to the immigration movement. Questions for both, however, remain. Will the support be full-throated or modulated by continuing self-interest? For example, is business interested in policy reform that would provide a path to citizenship or only interested in increasing the pool of workers?

Beyond unions are nonprofit organizations working to protect immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, from exploitation at work. One organization working at this junction is the Workers Defense Project, a community organization for low-wage, immigrant workers in the Texas construction industry. Funders include the Ford, Nathan Cummings, and General Service foundations.

### Funder Strategies & Trends

Because immigration is such a complex, multi-faceted matter that overlaps or connects with other social issues, many organizations and funders see the need for intersectional approaches. Unbound Philanthropy sees its funding for immigrants and

### Grantee Spotlight



Established in 1979, the National Immigration Law Center remains one of the leading organizations in the country “exclusively dedicated to defending and advancing the rights of immigrants with low income.” In 2019, NILC finalized a new strategic framework to include fostering intersectional alliances and building a stronger and more inclusive immigrant justice movement. NILC receives support from a variety of large funders including the Ford Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and JPB Foundation.

refugees as a “lens to get to other types of challenges this country faces,” noted the foundation’s U.S. Program Director Ted Wang, and as a way to advance “racial justice, economic justice, criminal justice.”

One intersection is climate change and migration. A leading driver of displacement, climate change is not recognized by the United States—or by multinational treaties—as a legitimate reason to admit displaced people. Furthermore, there is a growing need for protections for workers, including migrant workers, endangered by climate change—by, for example, exposure to extreme heat. Unbound Philanthropy is considering this issue, and has convened funders with the goal of supporting an ecosystem for work at this nexus. Some of the other major trends funding for immigrants and refugees include:

**Rebalancing Employment Training and Direct Cash Assistance.** Organizations provide a wide range of humanitarian services to refugees and immigrants, including emergency aid (including cash assistance), food distribution, healthcare, resettlement help, job training and other forms of economic development. U.S. funders support organizations providing these services in the United States and, to a lesser degree, around the globe. The organization receiving the largest dollar amounts for this type of work is the International Rescue Committee, which works globally, including in the United States, providing humanitarian aid as well as engaging in research and advocacy.

Some funders focus on the unique needs of refugee and immigrant women and girls and provide such offerings as programming on gender-based violence and reproductive health services, education and commodities. Unaccompanied

minor children also comprise a population that requires special attention and receives significant funding.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased the need for humanitarian assistance and made it more difficult and expensive to provide. Many funders gave special support to grantees for COVID relief. The Barr Foundation, for example, gave COVID response grants to more than a dozen immigrant services organizations in Massachusetts. The Clowes Fund awarded 20 COVID relief emergency grants to immigrant services organizations. Other foundations giving special COVID grants to immigrant services organizations include the Lilly Endowment, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Weingart Foundation, the Oregon Community Foundation, and the California Community Foundation.

The California Immigrant Resilience Fund, a leading example of support for immigrants in the pandemic era, was established in 2020 to provide cash assistance to undocumented Californians affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In an earlier unprecedented action, Gov. Gavin Newsom designated a full \$75 million for direct cash payment to 150,000 undocumented immigrants. Subsequently, CIRF was set up as part of a public-private partnership with the state of California. The partnership works with nearly 60 local partner organizations that have long-standing relationships with underserved immigrant populations and communities across the state. While launched in response to COVID-19, CIRF was inspired by an earlier local fund created to respond to 2017 California wildfires, and is designed to establish a long-term infrastructure and statewide network that is expected to address future crises and opportunities rapidly.

A report commissioned by GCIR and Open Society Foundations in 2021, [Stand Together](#), examines COVID-19 direct relief funds for undocumented immigrants and describes promising practices for crisis grantmaking in immigrant communities. The report ends with recommendations on the role and practice of philanthropy, partnering with immigrant justice organizations, and going beyond cash assistance to systemic change.

**Resourcing Individual Legal Services and Policy Litigation.** It is hard to precisely quantify the grant dollars supporting legal services for immigrants and refugees. A search of Candid's grants data for "immigration law" results in 8,343 grants totaling more than \$800 million since 2014. While not all of these grants support legal services – for example, the second-highest recipient of these monies was the anti-immigrant Federation for American Immigration Reform, for example – much of the work of the preponderance of grantees is legal services. Also high on the list of recipients are the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, National Immigration Forum, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

Arrests, detentions and deportations of undocumented immigrants have increased significantly since the 1990s. According to César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández, author of the 2019 book "Migrating to Prison," immigration law and criminal law have merged, a development some call "crimmigration." This is an ahistorical phenomenon – traditionally, immigration cases were considered civil matters and were handled in the immigration court system, while criminal cases were the arena for prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges who oversee criminal prosecutions. The vast expansion of the immigrant detention system,

on the other hand, has representatives of the executive branch rather than the judicial branch conducting "trials" in which immigrants often do not have legal representation. In addition, myriad constitutional protections that apply in criminal courts do not pertain in immigration cases, depriving immigrants of human rights.

Front-line organizations work to overcome these barriers to rights and due process for individual migrants. Some of the same groups and others advocate for changes in policy to decouple immigration processes and criminal law.



*"For so long, the biggest priority was immigration reform. But the border and asylum are central to both the immigrant justice movement and the progressive movement."*

—Rini Chakraborty, Senior Director, Four Freedoms Fund at Neo Philanthropy

**Focusing on Border Regions.** It is a misconception that many resources go to the border region, said Negar Tayyar, co-founder and director of the Global Whole Being Fund in a two-part GCIR webinar on local and regional needs held in April 2021. "In reality, only a fraction of need is met in that region."

The border has been neglected, agrees FFF's Chakraborty, but she notes that this is changing. "For so long, the biggest priority was immigration reform," and central stage in the discourse were the 11 million undocumented immigrants already in the country. "But the border and asylum are central to both the immigrant justice movement and the

progressive movement,” she said, and attention is now shifting to border regions and border issues.

**Ensuring an Accurate Census Count.** One area of recent funder interest (and considerable philanthropic investment nationwide) was the 2020 U.S. Census, a particularly fraught headcount, with threats to a fair and complete count posed by the global pandemic and the federal administration’s attempt to limit the inclusion of immigrants. An [Inside Philanthropy article](#) pointed out that a dedicated cadre of philanthropies disbursed impressive sums to build up outreach infrastructure for the first U.S. census conducted primarily online. An informal collaborative of dedicated census funders, often referred to as the Democracy Funders Collaborative Census Subgroup, included frequent institutional funders of immigrants, like Ford, Carnegie, JPB, OSF and Kellogg.

When the Trump Justice Department said the 2020 Census questionnaire would include a question about citizenship status, opponents, including former Census Bureau directors, civil rights advocates and voices from the world of

philanthropy, argued that such a question would negatively impact the count by scaring away respondents. In a win for the census funders, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the citizenship question. But the question’s ghost still haunted the count. “The citizenship question, even though it [was] no longer on the census form, left behind a lot of fear of filling out the form, especially in immigrant communities,” Geri Mannion, director of the Carnegie Corporation’s U.S. Democracy program and a longtime leader in immigration philanthropy, told [Inside Philanthropy](#).

A portion of the funders supporting Census 2020 “Get out the Count” efforts later turned their attention to supporting efforts to increase public input on redistricting, often focused on immigrants and other communities of interest advocating for fair lines. The 2030 census is years away, but GCIR has already convened a discussion with researchers, funders and census mobilizers to debrief the results of philanthropic investments during the 2020 census cycle and to explore steps to prepare for the next national headcount.

#### **Fostering a Pro-Immigrant Narrative and Counteracting Anti-Immigrant Messaging.**

“Extreme anti-immigrant views have gained legitimacy and become part of the mainstream political debate,” asserted a 2018 report by the Anti-Defamation League, “through a concerted push by anti-immigrant groups and political figures” using stereotypes and bigotry to blame immigrants for problems in America. Anti-immigration forces amplify these tropes and pieces of disinformation via social media platforms and right-wing media outlets such as Breitbart and Fox News.

Overcoming the effects of these messages is a significant challenge for the immigrant rights

#### **Funder Spotlight**



The Carnegie Corporation of New York’s Democracy program focuses on supporting the civic integration of immigrants, voting rights, and voter participation of all citizens. Since 2001, it has awarded around \$200 million in grants to organizations working in this space on the national, state and local levels. Recent grantees include the American Immigration Council and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

movement; some funders are supporting efforts to do just that. For example, Unbound Philanthropy gave Race Forward, a New York-based organization, \$600,000 in 2019 for “support to establish the Immigrant Narrative Lab, a project to develop, test and disseminate narratives to change the public discourse around immigration.” The Ford Foundation supported the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures in 2020 with a \$1.765 million grant for “the Reclaiming the Border Narrative, enabling immigrant rights advocates, artists and writers to organize and preserve stories reflecting the dignity and truth of their communities.” Hardly a comprehensive list, but the following are additional organizations that have received support to conduct “narrative change” on immigration: La Union del Pueblo Entero, Define American, the San Diego Organizing Project, United We Dream Network, Welcome with Dignity and the National Immigration Law Center.

Advocates say much more funding is needed in this area to even compete with, if not defeat, the amplified disinformation campaign of anti-immigrant forces. “We talk about ‘changing the narrative’ like you can just hire a firm,” says Angie Junck of the Heising-Simons Foundation, but it is an uphill climb.

An important part of messaging strategies has been resourcing efforts of immigrants and refugees to tell their own stories and organize. Unbound Philanthropy’s Ted Wang noted that there has been a shortage of support for leadership development in the field. “We know that immigrants are highly motivated to be in this country,” he said. Funders should be supporting efforts to help them engage in public processes, to “be the bridge between their communities and the receiving communities” and encourage them to get involved in their local school boards, city councils, and other governance and policy bodies.

“We have been short-term and tactical,” agreed Heising-Simon’s Junck. The field must address inclusivity and representation, she said, and “focus on people and building their power.”

A December 2020 [article](#) in Inside Philanthropy reported on funders’ views of the philanthropic landscape in the wake of the end of the Trump presidency. Funders emphasized the need to continue resourcing immigrant-led movements, both to hold the Biden administration accountable to its promises and to address underlying economic and social challenges immigrants face.

## Grantee Spotlight



### Workers Defense Project

*Proyecto Defensa Laboral*

The Workers Defense Project (Proyecto Defensa Laboral) is strategically focused on immigrants working in the construction industry in Texas. The member-based statewide organization aims to “empower construction workers to secure the basic workplace rights they are entitled to, from paid sick leave to humane working conditions.” Its 2020 Annual Report revealed that 71% of construction workers did not receive benefits in their employment and 78% did not have health insurance. The Ford Foundation, a long-time supporter, has awarded the Workers Defense Project over \$5.3 million in grants since 2009.

### **Supporting Mental Health & Wellness.**

Funders are also supporting trauma-informed care and services. Migrant families and children face trauma before and during immigration processes. Often, especially in regard to small, grassroots groups, organizations provide legal services but do not have the resources or expertise needed to bolster emotional, behavioral and psychological health of clients they help.

The four years of the Trump administration, which centered anti-immigration efforts, were a crisis period for those working on immigration and refugees. “A lot of the funding was stop-gap rather than building resilience for the long term,” said GCIR Vice President Ivy Suryopas.

### **Inside Philanthropy**

August 2020 Survey

*“In this current moment, I do not believe enough money is allocated to support programs for refugees and asylum seekers. One of the most impactful programs at our institution has not been able to get the level of funding that it needs and deserves, because refugee and asylee support just is not a priority.”*

—Fundraiser, Denver, Colorado

### **Increasing Support for Collaborative Funds.**

Increasingly, funders are hearing – and responding to – the critique that funding decisions should move closer to those experiencing injustices. Many funders see support for collaborative funds as a key strategy to do that.

Now 10 years old, the New Americans Campaign is a collaboration of funders, immigration organizations and others working to assist immigrants through the naturalization process. “People tend to think once you get to this point, it’s easy, but it’s an involved process,” said Sara Campos

of the Grove Foundation, an NAC funder. Led by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, NAC is a national network of nonprofit partners that has completed citizenship applications for nearly a half-million permanent residents since 2011 and saved aspiring citizens more than \$456 million in application fees.

The Global Whole Being Fund launched in 2015 and is based in the San Francisco Bay Area. GWBF dedicates resources exclusively to refugee issues. It supports grassroots partners across 16 countries and along two key migration routes: the Central American journey toward the U.S. and the route from the Middle East/Northern Africa to Europe. The fund endorses a bottom-up, grassroots approach because organizations working at that level are closest to the needs of the communities they serve. Furthermore, these groups are severely underfunded – according to GWBF, they attract less than 1% of global funding. Noting the power of language, GWBF eschews the legal categories of refugees, asylum seekers and so on, preferring the overarching term “people on the move.”

Overseen by Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, the California Dignity for Families Fund partners with California Gov. Gavin Newsom to help migrant families and unaccompanied children at the U.S.-Mexico border as well as Afghan and Haitian migrants seeking humanitarian relief. The fund aims to raise \$20 million and will align with Newsom’s proposed \$25 million. Current donors include the California Community Foundation, California Endowment, California Wellness Foundation, Crankstart, Dr. Bronner’s Family Foundation, Emerson Collective, Fineshriber Family Foundation, Grove Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, Heising-Simons Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Rosenberg

Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Stupski Foundation, Sunlight Giving, Unbound Philanthropy and Weingart Foundation.

The fund has paid out grants in two dockets, in September and November 2021, supporting 23 organizations with a total of \$4,628,000. Grantees include Al Otro Lado, Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project, Border Butterflies (a project of the Transgender Law Project), California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, Haitian Bridge Alliance, National Center for Youth Law, and Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans.

## Perspectives on Equity

Immigration and issues of racial and ethnic equity are inextricable and sometimes even indistinguishable. “The U.S. immigration system has always had a race-specific approach,” said Ted Wang, U.S. program director for Unbound Philanthropy.

The first citizenship law in the United States made citizenship available only to “free white persons,” a provision upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first significant law restricting immigration into the United States. It suspended Chinese immigration for 10 years and declared Chinese immigrants ineligible for naturalization. Subsequent acts continued the policy, and a series of Supreme Court cases upheld the law.

The Immigration Act of 1924 established ethnicity-based quotas based on now-debunked eugenic “science.” The law favored immigrants from northern and Western Europe and effectively barred all immigration from Asia. It wasn’t until the 1960s, at the height of the civil rights

movement, that the quota system was eliminated with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which shifted to an immigration system based on family unity and skilled laborers.

But bias against immigrants of color persists. “The racism present in the criminal legal system spills over and informs the immigration enforcement system, and thus, it naturally and unjustly targets Black immigrants at all stages of the process,” reads the State of Black Immigrants, a joint report from the Black Alliance for Immigration Justice and the NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic. Immigration enforcement has disproportionately targeted Mexicans and Central Americans

“Del Rio was harsh,” said Wang, referring to the horrifying images of white CBP enforcers on horseback swinging long leather reins against Black Haitians at the border near Del Rio, Texas, in October 2021. “But it was not unusual.”

“Black migrants face a lot of challenges that other migrant groups do not face or don’t face to the same degree, much of that rooted in the racial inequality, the anti-Blackness that is inherently part of this country,” Nana Gyamfi, executive director of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), told NPR in February 2021. “As Black immigrants, we are much more likely to find ourselves in detention or deportation proceedings.”

Wang said one way Unbound Philanthropy pushes back against anti-Black racism in the immigration system is by funding Black-led organizations working on immigration. Some of these organizations include African Communities Together, BAJI, the Black LGBTQI+ Migrant Project, the Haitian Bridge Alliance, and UndocuBlack.

In November 2021, the Open Society Foundations announced \$1.3 million in rapid response funding to support front-line organizations providing legal and other services to the Haitian asylum seekers arriving at the U.S.-Mexican border. It is intended, moreover, to enable Black-led organizations to advocate for humane treatment of all Black immigrants to the United States. Grants went to organizations including Haitian Bridge Alliance, UndocuBlack Network, the Black Alliance for Just Immigration and Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project.

Another equity issue concerns indigenous migrants from Mexico and Central and South America who face unique challenges as migrants. Although few if any hard statistics exist related to Indigenous immigrants, their numbers are growing as families from Northern Triangle countries (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) have become more commonplace over the past decade. Indigenous migrants are often miscategorized as Hispanic or Latino, erasing their identities and creating misunderstandings about language. Few interpreters speak Native languages, and the resulting communications barriers lead to greater risk for family separation, deportation and due process violations.

One organization working in this space is Comunidades Indígenas en liderazgo (CIELO), an Indigenous women-led nonprofit organization that works jointly with Indigenous communities residing in Los Angeles. Both CIELO and the Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB) have worked to match indigenous interpreters with detainees. FIOB has been training indigenous interpreters since the late 1990s, has also been working with other indigenous groups to fund trained interpretation at detention centers, while training new interpreters and establishing a

baseline set of principles on which indigenous interpretation should rest.

In a 2019 NCRP publication, “How Philanthropy Can Help Stop the Invisibilization of Indigenous Migrants in the U.S.,” Odilia Romero, an independent interpreter of the Indigenous Zapotec language and co-founder of CIELO, and Xiomara Corpeño, a migrant justice organizer and independent consultant offered recommendations for funders.

### Grantee Spotlight



The Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project is a fiscally sponsored organization of the Transgender Law Center. BLMP programs includes national organizing, building local and regional networks, engaging communities, defending detained community members against deportation and data collection on the Black LGBTQIA+ experience. BLMP also provides direct cash assistance to Black LGBTQIA+ migrants and first generation people impacted by COVID-19

Immigrants from Asian and Pacific Island countries face unique challenges, including increased violence stemming from misinformation and disinformation about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2021, the California Endowment responded with a pledge of \$100 million over 10 years to nonprofits led by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. In March, AT&T and WarnerMedia committed \$7 million in contributions in support of #StopAsianHate, including a multiplatform campaign to raise awareness around violence toward Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation announced in November 2021 that it was awarding \$5.5 million in grants to nearly two-dozen nonprofit organizations serving “the increasing needs of Asian, Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities.” Ranging in focus from local service to national policy organizations, almost all the groups are located in California. Supported organizations include 18 Million Rising, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, Asian Law Alliance, National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum, and Stop AAPI Hate.

While racial and ethnic equity are central to the immigration conversation, gender equity is also important, “both in terms of women’s particular vulnerabilities and the rising numbers of women crossing the border,” said FFF’s Chakraborty. She pointed to grim stories about the prevalence of sexual violence as women make the perilous journey and after they reach the supposed safety of the United States. Watchdog organizations like members of the Detention Watch Network, the nonprofit investigative journalism site ProPublica

and the federal government’s own Office of the Inspector General have reported thousands of incidents of sexual abuse in detention centers run by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

LGBTQ+ individuals, especially trans women, also face enormous threats, and too often experience violence. A 2017 CAP analysis found that LGBTQ+ people are 97 times more likely to be victimized within detention than other detainees. “ICE is placing LGBT immigrants in harm’s way,” the CAP report said, “by not releasing them from detention when they should be and has reverted to its practice of detaining transgender women with men or in solitary confinement, contrary to its own rules.” National organizations working in these spaces include the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies, TransLatin@ Coalition, and the Transgender Law Center. Funders in this space include the Ford and Arcus foundations as well as Borealis Philanthropy.

Unaccompanied minor children are also particularly vulnerable, facing high levels of violence and exploitation. They need critical procedural and protective mechanisms that differ from those provided to adults. Funders should also be attentive to the unique needs of differently abled people, including those experiencing mental illness, entering and seeking to enter the United States.

### Funder Spotlight



Though the California Endowment’s mission focuses on the health of Californians, it is an active immigrant and refugee funder. In addition to its 10-year \$100 million commitment to AAPI communities across the state, the endowment has a history of supporting organizations such as the National Immigration Law Center, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and Khmer Girls in Action.

# A Closer Look at Funder Types

## Private Foundations

Among the private foundations investing the highest sums for work for immigrants and refugees are the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Colcom Foundation (anti-immigration funding), Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and JPB Foundation.

Beyond the size of their portfolios for immigrants and refugees, several private foundations play important roles in the field. The Ford Foundation's pioneering history in funding for immigrants and refugees helped shape the field and the foundation's commitment to and leadership on these issues is almost without parallel. (See the introduction for a look at the history of Ford's involvement.) Carnegie Corporation of New York has been similarly influential, thanks largely to the work of Geri Mannion, managing director, Strengthening U.S. Democracy and the Special Opportunities Fund at Carnegie.

Although it is much smaller than Ford or Carnegie, Unbound Philanthropy has outsized influence in the field. Mannion and Taryn Higashi, executive director of Unbound Philanthropy, were instrumental in establishing the Four Freedoms Fund, a donor collaborative managed by NEO Philanthropy that has nurtured a nationwide movement for immigration justice and reform.

In addition to providing grants, some private foundations are using an immigrants and refugees lens in their impact investing strategies. (According

to Mission Investors Exchange, "lens-based investing is the process of incorporating issues affecting a certain population or topic area into investment decisions.") One example is the Massachusetts Pathways to Economic Advancement Pay for Success project, which includes literacy and job training programs to support individuals with limited English skills. The commonwealth will repay investors only if JVS successfully achieves positive outcomes for participants as defined in the contract. The project will measure three outcomes among project participants: (1) earnings, (2) successful transitions to higher education and (3) program engagement.

MIE notes additional areas where impact investing may support immigrant communities, including supporting financial services for underserved populations, such as through credit unions and fostering responsible lending to immigrant borrowers, who are at greater risk from predatory lenders. Foundations can also use their voices as shareholders to hold accountable corporations that build and run immigrant detention centers or exploit undocumented workers.

Among foundations that direct substantial resources to organizations working with refugees is the Zellerbach Family Foundation. Established in 1956 by Jennie B. Zellerbach, the foundation had been known principally as a supporter of the arts, helping to establish San Francisco as a major cultural center in the United States. But in 1975, ZFF made a grant to the International Institute to benefit Southeast Asian refugees, marking the beginning of the foundation's support for immigrants and refugees. Today, ZFF continues to support the arts, immigrants and refugees, and organizations working for social change.

ZFF's grantee partners include the 1951 Coffee Company, which provides job training and employment to refugees while educating the surrounding community about refugee issues. In addition to providing barista training, 1951 Coffee operates brick and mortar cafes that are run entirely by refugees.

Other private foundations that are major contributors to immigrants and refugees work include James Irvine, Susan Thompson Buffett, W.K. Kellogg, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr., Grove, Wallace H. Coulter and Robin Hood foundations.

The Grove Foundation generally hasn't received a lot of press, but has a dedicated funding area for immigrants. It aims "to protect immigrants and advance their rights, primarily by supporting a broad range of legal services." The Grove Foundation was founded by Andy and Eva Grove. Andy came to this country as a refugee and Eva as an immigrant; Andy made his fortune at Intel. Grove Foundation's immigrants program area is primarily focused in the Bay Area (especially San Mateo County), but it also supports some national-level advocacy and "impact litigation."

## Corporate donors

Private and publicly held companies and their foundations sometimes support immigrants and refugees, as well, including the Applied Materials

Foundation, Ben & Jerry's Foundation, Chobani Foundation, Coca-Cola Foundation, Intel Foundation, Salesforce.com Foundation, TripAdvisor Charitable Foundation, and VMware Foundation.

In 2021, the Coca-Cola Foundation announced that it would make a series of donations to support organizations whose missions include immigrant-focused work. Grants included \$1 million for the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, \$500,000 for Asian Americans Advancing Justice, \$100,000 for the National ACE #AAPIStrong program, and \$250,000 for the Center for Pan Asian Community Services in Atlanta.

In 2020, Airbnb.org, Airbnb's nonprofit arm, launched a philanthropic program to provide emergency temporary housing to the needy. The program, featured in a 2021 [Associated Press story](#), is considered a model for those seeking to resettle refugees. In 2021, it resettled 7,600 Afghan refugees after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and has pledged to resettle 12,500 more. Airbnb also made a four-year, \$4 million pledge in cash and housing credits to the IRC in 2017. More recently, in 2022, Airbnb.org and Airbnb announced that Airbnb.org will offer free, short-term housing for up to 100,000 refugees fleeing Ukraine. These stays were to be funded by Airbnb, Inc., donors to the Airbnb.org Refugee Fund, and the generosity of hosts through Airbnb.org.

## Coalition Spotlight



In 2016 Hamdi Ulukaya, founder of Chobani, established the Tent Partnership for Refugees in an effort to help end the global refugee crisis. Tent encourages businesses to support refugees through hiring, training, championing entrepreneurship and tailoring their products to better meet their needs. Since its founding, Tent has grown to a network over 250 companies "committed to integrating refugees in their host communities."

In 2018, the Chobani Foundation gave almost \$2 million to the Tent Partnership for Refugees, a coalition of global business entities committed to including refugees. In 2021, Chobani joined the Tent Coalition for Afghan Refugees, pledging to explore hiring and training opportunities for Afghans in the U.S.

## Community Foundations

Hundreds of community foundations across the country support organizations serving immigrants and refugees. Topping the list by dollar amounts and number of grants awarded are the Miami Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, the Oregon Community Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, the Seattle Foundation, the New York Community Trust, the California Community Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust, and the Denver Foundation.

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation is a significant funder of immigrant- and refugee-related organizations. Along with building strong communities, economic security, and education, immigration is one of four key areas of its strategic grantmaking and community impact funding. Even before the Trump administration's hostile immigration policies spurred giving to immigration and refugee-related organizations, SVCF had in place a multipronged immigration strategy. To bridge the cultural gap and create better understanding of both the receiving and immigrant communities in the region, the foundation invested in programs to ensure the provision of affordable and reliable legal services for immigrants, to ensure greater economic advancement by immigrants through programs providing vocational English and English as a second language courses, and funded the use of art and media coupled with a social change agenda.

In 2021, SVCF gave grants of \$500,000 each to Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, and New Breath Foundation. Six additional organizations received \$100,000 or more: Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project, California Immigrant Policy Center, American Immigration Council, Immigrant Legal Resource Center, the Black Alliance for Just Immigration, and Voces de la Frontera. Dozens of additional organizations received grants of \$75,000 and below.

SVCF has also facilitated collaboration among its grantees, hosting convenings in which nonprofit partners come together to learn from each other, engage in critical discussions, and take collective action to move the needle on challenging social issues.

## Inside Philanthropy August 2020 Survey

*"[The philanthropic sector is neglecting] equitable integration programs for immigrants and refugees, including advocacy for and instituting language access among all levels of government agencies."*

—Fundraiser, Strongsville, Ohio

In an example of how immigration and refugee-related work has expanded beyond the coasts and southern border with Mexico, the Minneapolis Foundation and the St. Paul and Minnesota Foundation give significant support to organizations in that region working with immigrants from a wide range of geographies. Recent grants have supported immigrants from the African continent, Hmong refugees, and immigrants from Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries, as well as newcomers from Korea, Laos, Vietnam and other countries.

Although humanitarian and legal services comprise the preponderance of support from community foundations for immigration and refugee issues, one community foundation stands out as a major supporter of anti-immigration efforts. As Inside Philanthropy [reported](#), the Foundation for the Carolinas, which hosts 2,600 donor-advised funds, is one major conduit of money to organizations pushing for immigration restriction. In 2016, it gave around \$4.3 million to such groups. In 2015, that number was about \$4.8 million. NumbersUSA was the biggest recipient, racking up about \$5 million in grants over two years. These gifts, none of which can be traced back to a specific donor, made up a relatively small percentage of the foundation's total giving each of those years, which ranged from about \$260 to \$290 million.

### Community Foundation Spotlight



THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST

EQUITY • OPPORTUNITY • PROSPERITY

The Chicago Community Trust does not have specific grantmaking programs dedicated to immigrants and refugees. Rather, it gives to related causes through its other grantmaking strategies such as Addressing Critical Needs and Advocating for Policy Change. Recent grant recipients include the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Upwardly Global.

### Major Donors

A handful of high-net-worth individuals support immigration efforts, including Laurene Powell Jobs and married couple Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg. One notable individual, Thomas Mellon, has contributed to immigration restrictionist organizations.

Laurene Powell Jobs, widow of Apple CEO Steve Jobs, co-founded College Track, an education nonprofit, and through it, came to see firsthand that there were many bright, enterprising young students who came to the United States undocumented at a young age. As discussed in [IP's profile of Powell Jobs](#), when legislators proposed the DREAM Act, Powell Jobs commissioned Academy Award-winning filmmaker Davis Guggenheim to produce a 30-minute film titled "The Dream is Now" to raise awareness and support for the issue. More publicly vocal on this issue than is characteristic for her, she has discussed her support in interviews and held screenings for groups of elected officials and at college campuses across the country. Recent grantmaking via the Emerson Collective, her philanthropic LLC, has supported immigrants' rights, including healthcare and education, as well as the creation of policy for "a path for hard-working undocumented immigrants to earn the privilege of citizenship over time."

Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan's philanthropic LLC is the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and its support for immigration reform is noted in a recent [IP overview of its last five years](#). CZI has spun off its immigration reform giving, providing \$100 million over the next three years to FWD.us, a 501(c)(4) immigration advocacy organization Zuckerberg and Chan co-founded in 2013. Since that time, FWD.us has been a major recipient of CZI cash as it evolved from a Silicon Valley-flavored lobbying shop into an important (though not uncontroversial) national voice on flashpoint issues like DACA. With its huge investment in FWD.us, CZI is winding down its own grantmaking in this area. IP's analysts said that prompts the question of whether movement groups will experience gaps in funding or a

cessation of support. One source told Theodore Schleifer of Puck News that FWD.us wants to ensure that doesn't happen. But it's hard to know exactly how all this reshuffling will affect existing grantee relationships over the long term.

Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz and his wife Cari Tuna give through three vehicles: Open Philanthropy, Good Ventures and GiveWell. Open Philanthropy, a donor-advised fund at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, is made up of these affiliated organizations that research potential focus areas, investigate giving opportunities, make grants and investments, and share lessons learned. Open Philanthropy, which is funded primarily by Tuna and Moskovitz, has distributed more than \$1.5 billion since 2014. One of four focus areas of Open Philanthropy is U.S. policy. Under that umbrella are five issues, including immigration policy, to which the fund has given grants totaling more than \$13 million to nonprofits including the Center for Global Development, Mercy Corps, MoveOn.org Civic Action, Refugee Assistance Project and U.S. Association for International Migration.

Timothy Mellon is a Wyoming-based billionaire and heir to one of America's richest family dynasties. For years, he has supported efforts to restrict immigration to the United States. A major donor to the Trump presidential campaign, Mellon was the biggest donor in 2010 to a legal fund set up to defend an Arizona law that required police to determine the immigration status of people they suspected were in the country illegally. Mellon made headlines again in 2021 when he contributed \$53.1 million in stock to Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's controversial private fund to continue the building of a border wall between Texas and Mexico.

Mellon's money now constitutes 98% of the fund's total for a project expected to cost billions.

## Intermediaries and Associations

A large array of intermediaries receive and distribute grant funding in the immigrant and refugee space. Some are religiously affiliated nonprofits such as local Catholic Charities USA organizations, Church World Service, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

Church World Service, according to the group's 2018 990, gave more than \$18.5 million in cash grants for services to displaced people outside the U.S. and \$12.7 million in cash grants to U.S. organizations for work that includes services to immigrants and refugees. The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service is one of the largest of the faith-based givers in this area, having given, according to Candid, nearly \$100 million in grants between 2015 and 2019. The largest grants have gone to Bethany Christian Services, based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. According to the group's website, it works in more than 30 states and more than a dozen countries worldwide, serving more than 50,000 people each year.

Catholic Charities Diocese of Fort Worth gave more than \$31.5 million in this area between 2015 and 2019, including almost \$2 million in 2019 to Refugee Services of Texas and \$1.1 million to the International Rescue Committee.

Nonsectarian intermediaries receiving support and making grants in the immigration and refugee space include Borealis Philanthropy, Fund for Global Human Rights, Proteus Fund, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, local United Way

organizations, and Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Human Rights.

In 2020, the Proteus Fund gave more than \$1.17 million total in grants to more than 40 organizations for work on immigration issues. Three of the largest grants, each totaling \$70,000, went to the South Asian Americans Leading Together, the Sikh Coalition, and Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM).

### Intermediary Spotlight



The Proteus Fund’s work “focuses on the interconnected goals of racial, gender, queer, and disability justice and an inclusive, fully representative democracy.” It’s donor collaboratives—The Piper Fund, Rise Together Fund and the Rights Faith and Democracy Collaborative—support a number of nonprofits working with immigrants and refugees. Recent grantees include the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition and the New York State Immigrant Action Fund.

As another example of the vastness of regranting in the immigrants and refugees space, the United Way of Central Iowa gave Lutheran Services in Iowa a grant of \$349,000 in each of the years 2018, 2019 and 2020 for that organization’s work with refugees and asylum seekers.

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees is the primary funder affinity group that is solely dedicated to this issue, but there are many aligned groups engaged in these conversations. Each of the affinity groups serve as gathering places for funders to discuss and plan collaborative efforts around immigrants and refugee issues, but

generally do not have regranting functions. Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, a network of over 130 members “dedicated to uplifting the contributions and addressing the needs of this country’s immigrant and refugee populations, has the broadest reach. GCIR members are local, state and national foundations with diverse grantmaking priorities, including health, education, rights and justice, economic security, and more.” Other funder affinity groups have priority focus areas that sometimes overlap with immigrants and refugees, presenting program and networking opportunities to their members on these issues, including Neighborhood Funders Group, Africa Grantmakers Affinity Group, Hispanics in Philanthropy and Human Rights Funders Network.

# Fundraising Now

Many American charities that work to help immigrants and refugees have learned the importance of raising money the hard way. Many such organizations rely heavily on government aid and, to a lesser extent, on charging fees for services such as helping new arrivals complete required paperwork. Their revenues plummeted when former President Trump slashed the number of refugees entering the United States.

While some of Trump's predecessors allowed 100,000 or more refugees to enter the United States each year, Trump cut the number to 45,000 in fiscal year 2018; 30,000 in fiscal year 2019; 18,000 in fiscal year 2020; and proposed just 15,000 refugee admissions for fiscal year 2021. Trump's reductions came as his administration adopted other policies to keep asylum seekers from entering the U.S. at the southern border until they had secured a date for their case to be heard in an American court.

"For those who received government funding tied to the number of refugees coming into the U.S., they were stripped to the bare bones, they were decimated," said Sarah Hidey, chief development officer at RefugePoint, a Boston charity that has helped more than 100,000 refugees find solutions through resettlement, self-reliance or other pathways to safety.

On the other hand, charitable donations often surge from individuals, foundations and corporations sympathetic to the plight of new arrivals, like the thousands of Afghans brought to the United States following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan last year.

The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has helped resettle more than 11,000 Afghan refugees in the United States out of some 76,000 Afghans brought here. Last year, the charity received contributions from 15,000 new donors, and contributions have soared from a high of \$5 million annually to some \$20 million last year. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service used some of the money to add to its staff, which has grown from 60 to 240 people since 2020.

Other donations to the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service have been used to create new programs. One such initiative, called New American Cities, aims to help new arrivals develop skills and advance in the workforce. In April, the new program won a \$1 million grant from the Walmart Foundation. The retail giant sees the new arrivals as potential employees and customers, said Andrew Steele, the charity's vice president of development. Another new program at the Lutheran charity offers counseling and other assistance to refugees, mostly young unaccompanied clients whose displacement has impacted their mental health, Steele said.

**Subpopulations and Equity in Focus.** Other charities working with immigrants and refugees have increased fundraising returns by focusing on subgroups within the larger immigrant and refugee population. Since 2019, under the leadership of Executive Director Steve Roth, the Organization for Refugee, Asylum and Migration (ORAM) has concentrated on helping lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Prior to 2019, the organization had relied heavily on charging fees for its services, but that approach was no longer working, Roth said.

In response, ORAM created an online platform for LGBTQ clients to share their stories, and the charity also uses their real-life experiences in its fundraising solicitations. Since it adopted new practices, ORAM has seen a rise in contributions from individual donors, corporations and foundations. Corporate support, Roth said, has increased – it was at zero before 2019 and now accounts for 15% of all donations.

## Inside Philanthropy

August 2020 Survey

*“Donors should give funds to those they trust, with missions they support and then get out of the way. They should act more like equity investors and less like program managers. Donors also need to consider what long term really means. They need to stick with organizations longer and make multi year commitments so organizations can plan and adjust without spending all their time dialing for dollars or explaining necessary adjustments.”*

—Foundation Professional, Rockland, Maine

Meanwhile, three new foundations also supported ORAM last year. Obtaining new foundation support is particularly notable – [research](#) by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy found that while immigrants and refugees account for 14% of the U.S. population, local foundations gave barely 1% of their total grant dollars to benefit foreign-born people. What's more, less than half a percent of local grants in the U.S. were earmarked for advocacy or organizing on behalf of immigrants and refugees. In its 2022 fiscal year, which ended on March 31, ORAM raised \$600,000 in contributions, up from \$420,000 in 2021. Roth said he is confident that his organization can attract \$1 million in donations during fiscal year 2023, which began on April 1.

Since the summer of 2020, following the murder of George Floyd and other racially charged tragedies throughout the nation, a renewed focus on diversity, equity and inclusion has also affected the fundraising landscape for charities assisting immigrants and refugees. “A lot of funders have asked us what we are doing to be equitable. How are you ensuring that refugee voices are heard and are on your board? This has become a key priority, and we are trying to lead by example,” said Hidey of RefugePoint.

To that end, RefugePoint, which raised more than \$7 million in 2020, the latest year for which data are available, has recruited refugees to serve on its board and on an advisory council in Kenya, Hidey said. It also hosted a presentation called Centering Refugee Voices at a global meeting aimed at philanthropists, sharing information on the ways refugees inform the work of the individuals and charitable organizations backing them.

### The Economy and COVID Challenge

**Fundraisers.** Whether they are struggling to raise money or flush with new contributions, charities that help immigrants and refugees are also facing new fundraising challenges that have only emerged in recent months, and are unlikely to abate any time soon. “The public is in a very foul mood,” said Tim Delaney, chief executive at the National Council of Nonprofits. “We have the pain of inflation, the threat of recession. I think it will be harder to raise money. Then you have nonprofits going under as a result of the pandemic.” Delaney said that the amount of online traffic on his organization’s website to content about dissolving a nonprofit has increased by 30%.

Taking one state as an example, according to Forbes, the Minnesota Attorney General’s office

found that nearly 200 of the state's nonprofits [shut down](#) between April 2020 and March 2021 as a result of the pandemic. And up to 38% of charities could permanently shutter as a result of COVID, according to a 2020 [analysis](#) by Candid of more than 315,000 nonprofit organizations subjected to pandemic-related financial circumstances. In addition, there have been numerous reports nationwide about nonprofit closures stemming from factors like COVID-driven service disruptions, staffing shortages and rising operation costs, but definitive information on nonprofit closures since the beginning of the pandemic remains elusive.

In the end, it's probably fair to say that the nonprofit organizations working with immigrants and refugees that are best equipped to survive the pandemic and emerging fundraising challenges related to the economy are those that have moved well beyond government support and charging fees for their services.

HIAS, a 100-year-old charity originally founded to assist Jews seeking safety from antisemitic violence, raised \$100 million last year. The charity, which now assists any population seeking safety, had projected that it would raise \$140 million by the end of this year. But Miriam Feffer, HIAS vice president for development, now predicts that contributions will be closer to \$180 million by December 31. The reason: Donors have responded generously to HIAS's work to assist Ukrainians displaced by Russia's invasion of their country in a still-ongoing war.

What's more, rather than depressing charitable contributions, Feffer said that the pandemic appears to have motivated new bequests and other planned gifts to her organization as donors contemplate their own mortality. "We saw an uptick in planned giving," Feffer said. "We believe that planned giving presented itself as a chance for long-term planning. We have come roaring back as the world keeps delivering crises."

## Fundraiser Spotlight



ORAM is one of the first INGOs helping people around the world fleeing persecution based on sexual/gender identity. ORAM helps LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers by offering emergency response services, new skills training to help build their livelihoods, and legal assistance and support. The organization receives support from foundations and corporate partners, including the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, Raymond James and Delta Airlines.

# An Analysis of Opportunities & Challenges

The complexity of immigration work includes difficulties attracting philanthropic support as well as the diversity of problems confronting immigrants and refugees. Despite being a “nation of immigrants,” the United States has deeply divided views on dealing with immigration and refugee issues, and the threatening strains of anti-immigrant virulence in our politics since the founding era are now reasserting their strength. In fact, at least one poll, by the group Populace in March 2021, found immigration to be the most polarizing issue in a nation rife with bitter divisions. This is clearly a challenge for those seeking philanthropic pro-immigration support, and it is exacerbated by the fact that the differences are not only philosophical, but also partisan.

With anti-immigration rhetoric identified with Republican partisanship and pro-immigration discourse connected with Democratic partisanship, some would-be donors could be reluctant to be seen as taking a side. This is particularly true when thinking beyond humanitarian services and creating a welcoming environment for immigrants and refugees, as in the context of creating policy and culture change around immigration. “Some funders are interested in welcoming and integrating,” says Marissa Tirona of Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, but, she indicated, perhaps less so in participatory democracy and building political power.

In addition, the subject of immigration is nearly inseparable from issues of race and racism. The border itself has become something of a “dog whistle,” says FFF’s Chakraborty, a coded racial appeal that avoids explicitly naming race while

calling to mind negative racialized stereotypes. This demonizing and “othering” of immigrants and refugees is a paramount challenge that will take years of narrative and culture change work to overcome. A related challenge, noted Unbound Philanthropy’s Wang, is to overcome misinformation and disinformation from biased sources. One way to do this, he says, is through deep canvassing, a way to move individuals’ opinions by getting them to engage with their experiences with and feelings about a topic, through which advocates can reach people “beyond the choir,” Wang said.

One favorable circumstance is that U.S. public opinion on immigration is, by and large, positive and growing increasingly so. In 2021, a national poll conducted by the Cato Institute, a generally conservative libertarian think tank, found that nearly three-fourths (72%) of Americans believe immigrants come to the United States to “find jobs and improve their lives.” According to Cato, “support for more immigration has tripled from the mid-1990s when about 10% of the public supported more immigration and two-thirds wanted less. Today 29% of Americans want more, 38% want to maintain current levels, and 33% want less.”

These findings are similar to those of a 2018 survey by Pew Research Center. In addition, Pew found in 2020 that Americans broadly support legal status for immigrants brought to the United States without documentation as children, with 54% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents and 91% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents in favor. Advocates in the sector can take advantage of this encouraging public sentiment.

A challenge worth noting is the abundance of small, community-based organizations providing crucial services and resources for immigrants and refugees. Angie Junck pointed to a lack of funding for infrastructure for organizations like Angry Tías and Abuelas of the Rio Grande Valley. “We need to take this [work] to scale,” she said.

An opportunity worth exploring, says Chakraborty, is the idea of public-private partnerships, an approach that is already bearing fruit with the California Dignity for Families Fund (see sidebar). Chakraborty is thinking even more expansively than joint funding for services. “Everybody deserves legal representation,” she said, “and fundamentally, this is the role of government” to provide, not philanthropy. Presently, it is hard to imagine that this strategy could work on a federal level or in states with anti-immigrant governments, like Texas, but it might be feasible in states with progressive governments, like California and New York.

## Fundraiser Spotlight



CALIFORNIA  
**DIGNITY**  
**FOR FAMILIES**  
FUND

The California Dignity for Families Fund is a public-private partnership aiming to raise an initial \$20 million to help migrant families and unaccompanied minors at the U.S.-Mexico border. It has expanded its mission to include support for Afghan and Haitian Migrants. The fund is supported by a number of foundations including the James Irvine Foundation, Heising Simons Foundation, the Emerson Collective, the California Wellness Foundation and many more.

# Resources

## Reports and Data Sets

[A Guide to Title 42 Expulsions at the Border.](#) (May 2022). American Immigration Council.

[An Overview of U.S. Refugee Law and Policy.](#) (September 20, 2021). American Immigration Council.

[CBP Enforcement Statistics Fiscal Year 2022.](#) (July 18, 2022). U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Connor, P., Hugo Lopez, M, Bell, J. & Ruiz, N. (October 12, 2017). [U.S. Resettles Fewer Refugees, Even as Global Number of Displaced People Grows.](#) Pew Research Center.

[Internal Migration 2020 Highlights.](#) (2020). United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

[Mainstreaming Hate: The Anti-Immigrant Movement in the U.S.](#) (November 2018). Anti-Defamation League Center on Extremism.

[Mathema, S., Hermann, A. & Prachal Svajlenka, N.](#) (September 2, 2018). Revival and Opportunity. [Immigrants in Rural America.](#) Center for American Progress.

[The Migrant Protection Protocols.](#) (January 7, 2022). American Immigration Council.

Morgan-Trostle, J., Zheng, K., & Lipscombe, C. (January 2022). [The State of Black Immigrants.](#) Black Alliance for Justice Immigration and NYU Law Immigrant Rights Clinic.

Pierce, S. & Bolter, J. (July 2020). [Dismantling and Reconstructing the U.S. Immigration System: A Catalog of Changes under the Trump Presidency.](#) Migration Policy Institute.

Rowland-Shea, J. & Doshi, S. (February 1, 2021). [The Extremist Campaign to Blame Immigrants for U.S. Environmental Problems.](#) Center for American Progress.

[State of Funding for the Pro-Immigrant Movement.](#) (n.d.). National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

## Websites & Individual Pages with Key Information:

Ahtone, T. (June 21, 2018). [Indigenous immigrants face unique challenges at the border](#). *High Country News*.

Amuzie, J. (October 18, 2021). [Leaders Call for More Investments to Support Black-Led Migrant Groups and Leaders](#). National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

Barragan, J. & Astudillo, C. (October 6, 2021). [Texas has raised \\$54 million in private donations for its border wall plan. Almost all of it came from this one billionaire](#). *The Texas Tribune*.

Caceres, Y. (November 9, 2021). [Decoding Racist and Xenophobic Dog Whistles](#). America's Voice.

[California Dignity for Families Fund](#). (n.d.) Grantmakers Concerned with Refugees.

Cuauhtemoc Garcia Hernandez, C. (August 2021). [Crimmigration Law](#). Second Edition.

Davis, C. & Morrison, M. (September 18, 2015). [The Chinese Exclusion Act](#). The National Archives.

[Designated Hate Groups](#). (n.d.). Southern Poverty Law Center.

Deto, R. (March 11, 2020). [How Pittsburgh's Colcom Foundation is 'greenwashing' its anti-immigrant message](#). *Pittsburgh City Paper*.

[Funders](#). (n.d.). California Immigrant Resilience Fund.

Ekins, E. & Kemp D. (April 27, 2021). [Poll: 72% of Americans Say Immigrants Come to the United States for Jobs and to Improve Their Lives](#). Cato Institute.

Fernandez, M. (March 3, 2019). ['You Have to Pay With Your Body': The Hidden Nightmare of Sexual Violence on the Border](#). *The New York Times*.

Fernandez, V. (November 17, 2020). [Trans women in ICE custody already suffered sexual harassment and abuse. Then came Covid-19](#). *The Guardian*.

[Hewlett Foundation to award \\$5.5 million to nonprofits serving AAPI communities](#). (November 18, 2021). William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Jawetz, T. & Shuchart, S. (February 20, 2019). [Language Access Has Life-or-Death Consequences for Migrants](#). Center for American Progress.

Krogstad, J.M. (June 17, 2020). [Americans broadly support legal status for immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children](#). Pew Research Center.

Kulish, N. & McIntire, M. (August 14, 2019). [Why an Heiress Spent Her Fortune Trying to Keep Immigrants Out](#). *The New York Times*.

[Migrant, Immigrant, and Refugee Lens Investing: Ideas and Strategies](#). (June 2018). Mission Investors Exchange.

[Open Society Announces \\$1.3 Million to Aid Haitian and Black Asylum Seekers](#). (November 1, 2021). Open Society Foundations.

Prest, M.J. (March 31, 2021). [2 Commitments of \\$100 Million Address Racial Wealth Gaps and Accelerate Covid Research](#). The Chronicle of Philanthropy.

[Resettlement Services](#). (July 7, 2022). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement

Romero, O. & Corpeno, X. (June 17, 2019). [How Philanthropy Can Help Stop the Invisibilization of Indigenous Migrants in the U.S.](#) National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

[State of Foundation Funding for the Pro-Immigration Movement](#). (n.d.) National Center for Responsive Philanthropy.

Shanmugasundaram, S. (July 18, 2019). [John Tanton's Legacy](#). Southern Poverty Law Center.

Ye Hee Lee, M. (June 18, 2020). [Timothy Mellon, top donor to Trump super PAC, used racial stereotypes to describe African Americans in his autobiography](#). *The Washington Post*.

Zeidel, R. (2009). [Pursuit of “Human Brotherhood”: Rockefeller Philanthropy and American Immigration, 1900–1933](#). *New York History*, 90(1/2), 85–106. Journal Storage (JSTOR).

# Thank You

*Thank you to these individuals who were interviewed:*

Sara Campos, Senior Program Officer, Grove Foundation

Rini Chakraborty, Senior Director, Four Freedoms Fund

Tim Delaney, Chief Executive Officer, National Council of Nonprofits

Miriam Feffer, Vice President for Development, HIAS

Sarah Hidey, Chief Development Officer, RefugePoint

Angie Junck, Human Rights Program Director, Heising-Simons Foundation

Steve Roth, Executive Director, Organization for Refugee, Asylum and Migration (ORAM)

Ted Wang, U.S. Program Director, Unbound Philanthropy

<sup>1</sup>Based on available grant recipient data from Candid. Excludes government organizations.

## Feedback?

The State of American Philanthropy is an ongoing project. Each SAP brief will be updated periodically to integrate new information, additional data and evolving perspectives. This brief was originally posted to Inside Philanthropy in August 2022. It has not yet been updated. If you have comments or information you'd like to share with us, please email us at [managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.com](mailto:managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.com).